

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Wednesday, February 22, 2023

House Bill 5004: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING - Support

House Bill 6693 - AN ACT CONCERNING ABSENTEE VOTING - Support

**Senate Bill 1057 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE AND
EARLY VOTING - Support**

**Senate Bill 1064 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY
VOTING - Support**

**Senate Joint Resolution No. 29 - RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO
THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING -
Support**

**House Joint Resolution No. 1 - RESOLUTION APPROVING A STATE
CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING
- Support**

Senator Flexer, Representative Blumenthal, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is David Walsh and I am a resident of Stafford Springs. I am a proud retiree member of CSEA SEIU Local 2001, where I serve as Co-chair of the Retiree Legislative Action Committee. In a survey of our retiree members which elicited more than 1000 responses, 80% of our members supported enactment of an early voting law in Connecticut, and 70% stated they would likely cast their ballot during the early period.

There are three compelling reasons for early voting in Connecticut. First, voting is the most important process for the maintenance of democracy. It is the link between elected officials and the citizens who choose them to make and administer public policy. At a time when anti-democratic extremists talk of political candidates “choosing” voters through gerrymandering and the manipulation of legal requirements to vote, measures to expand the electorate are of paramount importance.

Second, to be effective laws must take into account changing conditions within society. We are no longer an agricultural nation of small towns where citizens can gather to vote on a single day after the crops have been harvested. Today people are single parents, workers of multiple jobs with irregular shifts, dependents on public transportation (or rides from others). We know that life can be upset by pandemics, natural disasters, extreme weather conditions, and myriad personal challenges.

Third, studies have long documented economic and social inequality in Connecticut. We must not add political inequality to the list. No one should be denied the opportunity to vote because a babysitter didn't arrive, an older vehicle didn't start, or a worker making minimum wage couldn't afford to lose several hours of pay to stand in line to vote.

Finally, we urge the General Assembly to implement an early voting law in a way that will maximize

its impact on voter turnout. The program must be communicated to the electorate in a variety of ways – radio, television, newspapers, billboards, and posters placed on buildings and public vehicles – not just official government websites. An adequate number of polling stations must be created that are accessible by public transportation, especially in areas inhabited by marginalized populations. Further, the state must provide the funding for election personnel, supplies, advertising, and rental/maintenance costs during the early voting period.

David Walsh
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